

# **Emotional Distress: The Resultant Effects of Street Hawking and Sexual Abuse of Female Children in Oyo State, Nigeria**

by

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## **Abstract**

This descriptive study examined emotional distress resulting from the effects of street hawking and sexual abuse of female children in the Iseyin Local Government Area of Oyo state, Nigeria. Female street hawkers were randomly recruited from streets in Iseyin town. Data was collected with semi structured interview questionnaires. The research commenced in December 2015 and ended in March 2016. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. 280 female children hawkers were the respondents of this study. Data was analysed using a simple percentage for the demographic data while chi-square was used to process the hypotheses raised. Out of the 280 respondents, 155 (55.4%) were of school age, 188 (67%) had been sexually abused with penetrative sexual intercourse. Many respondents 120 (64%) had adults as their sexual partner. Respondents between ages 12 and 13 had the highest incidence of sexual abuse, hence, 232 (83%). The results obtained from the null hypotheses indicates that the socio-economic status of parents was a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers. Also the educational background of the parents was found to be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers. Suggestions were made to curb street hawking and the consequences of sexual abuse, and implications of street hawking and sexual abuse and its emotional distress were discussed.

**Keywords:** Street hawking, sexual abuse, emotional distress, female children.

## Introduction

A child is defined as any person less than eighteen years of age, and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defined a child as a young human being below the age of full physical development. Hawking by children is a form of child labour which entails the act of moving round the streets and other areas not designated as markets to sell essential products (Oyinloye, Soronnadi & Udemezue 2002).

Street hawking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a female by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments, benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over the child for the purpose of exploitation (African Network on Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect, 2010). As stated by Edu (1999), hawking is the selling of things (usually goods) along the roads or from one place to another, while Abisoye (2013) defined it as the act of canvassing for sale of items by hawkers along the street, from house to house or in public places in town. According to Nseabasi and Oluwabamide (2010), street hawking is a negation of the international convention on the right of the child. It is indeed inhuman for anyone to engage a child in money-making ventures; because such a child is denied basic education which is a right for every child. Child street trading is a threat to the continued survival of society; hence, it distorts government policies in the education of youth, and it distorts the acquisition of vocational skills and relevant education, thereby destroying the economic sector.

Sexual abuse is a gender based issue and thus, the misuse or wrong use of sexuality whether in action, touching of breast or buttocks, very intimate body contact or actual sexual intercourse. It also includes use of words suggestive of intention to engage in any form of sexual activity or practice. Gender based violence is a major public health concern and infringement of human sexuality and reproductive rights. The World Health Organization estimates that at least one in five of world's female population has been physically or sexually abused. Among children, sexual abuse is increasing and girls are at risk (Wutoh, Kumoji & Xye 2006).

Girls have always been faced with problems that emanate from gender inequality in addition to the usual problems of childhood and adolescence. Besides the various health socio-cultural and educational problems to which girls are exposed, is the crucial and most often neglected hazards associated with child labour and street hawking. Street hawking is a common form of child labour in most developing countries like Nigeria, and the female child is usually involved.

The child on the street is exposed to malnutrition, respiratory tract infection, mental illness and substance abused (Sherman 1992), and the young female hawkers are in addition particularly vulnerable to all forms of violence including sexual exploitation by men (Fawole, Ajuwon & Osungbade 2004). The men prefer young girls as sexual partners because they assume they are sexually inexperienced and as such, are less likely to be infected with sexually transmitted disease (Lily Collins & Sara 2009).

In a society with poorly developed social networks and interventions, many of the girls accept it as their lot and fear being stigmatized if they should report (Fawole , Ajuwon & Osungbade 2004). Over the years traditional Nigerian society has deliberately discriminated against girls, especially in regards to education, with the wrong belief that subsequent marriage will deprive the parents and family of an investment. In order not to waste limited resources and to make the girl more “useful” to her family, she is given minimal education and the result is low aspiration and limited career and employment opportunities, not only true of the Iseyin local Government Area, but generally of Oyo North in Oyo state.

There are also stress related problems when some of the girls are given to rich families as house helps or baby sitters or are sent into the street to hawk. Walking across the street in various cities and towns in Nigeria, one would find a substantial number of boys and girls (who are supposed to be in school) engaged in menial or odd jobs such as newspaper vending, truck pushing, prostitution or other forms of forced labour. Most often girls are sent to the street to hawk all kinds of wares because of poverty related issues, and to help supplement family income. Also hawking is supposed to help prepare them for adult roles. This however, does not obviate that female adolescent hawkers on the street are exposed to numerous hazards ranging from physical violence to loss of wares, risk of accident, robbery, kidnapping and even murder for ritual purposes. They are exposed to the vagaries of weather (extremes of cold or heat), to insects and reptiles, and to hunger and deprivation. The most troubling perhaps is that some are sexually exploited and forced into prostitution with the risk of unintended pregnancies and contracting sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) (Muhammad Mahmud 2013).

Most trafficked and poor children who fall victim to this inhuman and intimidating condition are always busy preparing for their hawking business while the other privileged children of their mate are seen rushing to schools so that they will not be punished by their teachers for lateness. The most heart-breaking of it is that the madam to the trafficked children hardly buys good cloths for the children for the hard work they do. Early in the morning even at cold weather condition, the children are seen on the streets wandering like sheep without shepherd. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2007) has identified poverty, large family size, rapid urbanization among others as the major factor why many Nigeria female are vulnerable to trafficking. Parents with a large family are often prone to those traffickers deceit in giving away some of their girls to city residents or even strangers promising a better life for them. Trafficking deprives child victims the privilege to exercise their wide range of rights, including the right to belong and identify, and the right to freedom and education among others (ANPPCAN, 2010).

According to Onuzulike (2002), hawkers sell wares including daily needs, electronics, food items (Akpan & Oluwabamide ,2010), fruits, beverages, mobile phone accessories, cards (Kwankye, Nyarko & Tagoe 2007), cold soft drinks, cold sachet water, clothing materials, footwear and other materials (Okafor 2010). Winnie (2005) also identified commodities such as cosmetics, flowers, traditional herbs, craft/artwork/pottery, plastic products, hardware and general merchandise such as office stationery etc. as hawked items.

Traders use structures including tables, racks, wheelbarrows and bicycle seats to display their goods, while others use mats and gummy bags. Other hawkers carry their commodities on their heads and shoulders while some hang theirs on walls, trees, fences etc. On site of hawking as revealed by Ombudsman (2008) are particularly rampant where pedestrian traffic is heavy along main roads and streets near shopping centres and at corners where they can be seen by pedestrians and motorists. Nan (2008) identified market places, bus stops, major thoroughfares; streets where pedestrian traffic is high and where sidewalks are wide, residential areas, as well as newly paved roads that quickly attract new cars and foot traffic as hawking locations. Onuk and Beshi (2011) added that some hawk in commercial buses and at long traffic hold-ups.

Some of these girls wake up as early as 3.00 AM to prepare food and other things for sale and proceed to hawk often without breakfast. An earlier study on street children in Nigeria found that more than 15.4 % of female adolescent hawkers had procured abortion at least twice, had been pregnant without knowing who was responsible, had experienced rape and also contracted sexually transmitted infections (including HIV)(Osinowo 1992). Onuzulike (2007) grouped the consequences of street hawking by children into three, namely: Physical, Psychological and the social physical consequences to include: accidents, spread of communicable diseases, food poisoning and traffic congestion. Psychological consequences of child street hawking include: stress, fatigue, depression, anger and resultant ills. Social implications include: unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, smoking, robbery, truancy and poor academic performance among others.

In a study by Osinowo (1992), it was reported that 30% of the violence experienced by girls on the street were sexual in nature. This is an issue of great importance because in the traditional African society, the concept of sexuality is enshrouded in secrecy. Most abused girls do not report the crime because of the stigma attached to the issue. Although the society has sympathy for victims of sexual violence, it also visits them with some stigma. This problem is increasing in Nigeria due to large family size, wide spread poverty and growing unemployment. Child or children street hawking is about how girls and boys who are less than eighteen years are being sent out to the streets for hawking. Street hawking by children especially girls has been a common thing in most parts of the developing and undeveloped world. It does not only end on children's hawking but there are causes and its effects on the society at large. Irrespective of the causes and effects of children's hawking on the streets of many parts of the world, possible remedies/solutions can be applied by the governments, parents and sponsors to solve this challenging issue.

A number of factors have propelled world children into hawking in the streets. It is not as if the children are not willing to join their mates in schools to enjoy the breeze of good Western education, but something caused such condition to take place. A person is said to be poor when he or she lives below \$1.25 a day. It is clear that there are many people all over the world that live below this amount on a daily basis. Some parents who live below this amount of money have forced their children into street hawking. This is because parents cannot afford enough money to provide food in their homes, or afford to pay for school fees, yet they can make an effort to buy trays for their children and fill them with some edible materials to be sold on streets to people. These children in the course of street hawking meet with so many undesirable things, including death.

There are families that gave birth to too many children, and they are being handed over to other persons, relations or neighbours who are well to do. As a result, some families not adopting and practice family planning, and give birth to more than the number of children they can handle, and the children face difficulties as a result of this. It is not only the children that face hardship, but also the parents that gave birth to them. The parents begin to think on how to get support the children, and this ends up sending the children to the streets to make money.

Throughout the world, researchers like Onuzulike (2007), Akpan and Oluwabamide (2010), Abisoye (2013) and others concurred that poverty is the principal cause of child labour cum street hawking. In fact, Abisoye (2013) found that in Ibadan, as many as 93.3% of juvenile hawkers in his study attributed their involvement in hawking to their parents having no job. Corroborating the above findings, Oloko (2006) submitted that the Nigerian child is the direct victim of the poverty level of his or her parents. Child trafficking is an act against the law, but traffickers are still engaging in the dirty business. Trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation (Research Clue 2014). In some countries, women in the cities visit rural areas and meet mothers who they think can easily agree for them to have a number of children they cannot cater to take their daughters or sons to the city where they can stay. The poor parents usually think that the persons they handed over their children to will take care of them properly without knowing that they have subjected their children to the modern day slavery known as child trafficking.

The women in the trafficking business usually go to some other parts of the rural areas to gather as many children they want and finally travel to the cities with them. When the children get to the cities, as they want and be surprised to see that they were trafficked and hence do not know how to make their ways back to their parents homes. These women traffickers usually hand these children to other people who subject them to hawking on the streets of the cities. Some of these children were usually raped and exploited while hawking on the streets. And when war occurs, children usually go fatherless and motherless as the air of wars comes with many killings and bloodshed. The blood that is shed during wars is usually that of the parents of various children. When these children loose the people that care for them as a result of war, some persons take care of them which are not as excellent as their parents usually did. They are most times subjected to street hawking as their parents are no longer alive to house and cloth them properly. A good example is the Boko Haram insurgency which has claimed so many lives in the Northern part of Nigeria since it started in 2011. This is a war that claimed the lives of many mothers and fathers and made children homeless. Most of these children end up on streets and got employed in street hawking businesses.

There are locations in the world that have parents with a high illiteracy level. These kinds of parents do not pay any good respect to education. They lack the knowledge on how education can transform people to be better, so they prefer to send their children to the streets where they will make money for them. The illiteracy the parents of the children suffered from will be transferred to the children, because they do not attend schools when their mates were learning in the classroom. Illiteracy in some African countries for instance has contributed to a high level of street hawking by children. And the effects of children street hawking is not only felt by the victims, but by the society at large (Shailong, Onuk & Beshi 2011).

There are many people that have made their bodies their own business set-up all over the world. The sole business of wherein women surrender their bodies to any man that needs them at any moment in exchange of money is prostitution, a bad way of living because there are many dangers associated with it. The prostitutes we see in various buildings started it small and became professionals in the business. Some started when they were young, as a result of hawking on the streets, and they become experts as adults.

On the other hand, many young girls that hawk goods on streets as street children have on many occasions been raped by their superiors. The man may pretend to be nice to girls at the initial stage, but end up forcing the girl into illicit acts, irrespective of her age. And some madams that sent them out to the streets sometimes starve them when they do not make enough money, and often, because these children were deprived the benefits associated with education, they face difficulties in the future.

Other predisposing factors to child street hawking are: high cost of living, lack of sponsorship, poor school performance, poor parenthood, large family size, peer group pressure, poor home conditions, lack of parent care, and poor scholastic achievement (Onuzulike 2007). Along with unemployment, loss of parents, (Akpan & Oluwabamide, 2010), and cultural and religious factors coupled with the lack of enforcement of child labour restrictions and inconsistencies in anti-labour legislation, causing hawking (Okafor 2010).

While writing on the prevalence of street hawking in Africa, the International Labour Organisation cited by Okafor (2010) estimated that 25% of children between 10 and 14 years work in Africa, and mostly in trades in the streets. This situation become worse in year 2004 as ILO cited by Okafor (2010) estimated that 218 million children aged between 5-17 years were involved in child labour. Ogbe (2007) affirmed that street trading is the most commonly seen form of child abuse in Nigeria. According to Alebiosu (2007), street hawkers in urban cities are mostly children. This then implies that many of them are in-school children.

Street hawking irrespective of who (age and sex) engages in it, is associated with major hazards (Lu 2011). This includes sexual assault which increases the vulnerability of the hawkers to diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, increased risk of unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortions (Lu, 2011; Kwankye et al, 2007).

Other hazards include physical assaults, mobbing, involvement in road traffic accidents, kidnapping and ritual killings. Street hawking leads to increased exposure to antisocial activities like smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, cultism and crime. Also, hawkers are exposed to harsh weather conditions, insect and reptile bites and hunger (Ugochukwu et al, 2012; Amoo et al, 2012; Ashinmolowo et al, 2010; Ekpenyong & Nkereuwem 2011).

When children are involved, in addition to these other risks, they are deprived of education and sound health and these constitute child abuse (Ekpenyong & Nkereuwem, 2011). Sexual molestation was more common among the female hawkers, a finding which conforms to reports from other parts of the country (Olutunde, 2013; Ugochukwu et al, 2012; Amoo et al, 2012). Hence the present study investigates emotional distress as resultant effects of street hawking and sexual abuse among female children in Iseyin Local Government Area of Oyo state in Nigeria.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate emotional distress as a resultant effect of street hawking and sexual abuse among female children in Iseyin Local Government Area of Oyo state, Nigeria, with other objectives involving: an examination of the influence of religion on sexual abuse among female children hawkers, and evaluation of the influence of parental educational background on sexual abuse among female children hawkers, and assess the influence of family type (monogamy/polygamy) on sexual abuse among female children hawkers.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study are: what is the age distribution and educational status of the female children hawkers? And, is there any relationship between religion and sexual abuse among female children hawkers?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant (1) socio-economic status of parents will not significantly determine sexual abuse among female children hawkers, (2) parental educational background will not be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers, and (3) family type (monogamy/polygamy) will not be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers.

## **Methodology**

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive research design of ex-post facto type with a sample of female children hawkers in Iseyin town in Iseyin Local Government Area of Oyo state in Nigeria. Iseyin is located in the Northern part of Oyo state. It is about 72 kilometres to the state capital (Ibadan). The inhabitants of the area are predominantly of the Yoruba ethnic group with few Fulanis and Igbo traders. Iseyin is a semi urban town and is the head quarter of Iseyin Local Government. A large proportion of the inhabitants are traditional cloth weaver (Aso Oke) traders, farmers with few artisans and civil servants. The town is densely populated with poor housing and drainage system.

All the female children hawkers who were encountered on the street while hawking and who agreed to offer information were interviewed during the study. Thus the researcher used the convenience sampling technique known as accidental sampling procedure. The female hawkers whose age were 15 years and below were eligible for inclusion in this study, and out of 312 girls who fulfilled the inclusion criteria, thirty-two (32) refused to be interviewed or did not complete the filling of the questionnaire leaving only 280 questionnaires for analysis.

Structured questionnaires took about 25-30 minutes to administer and were used in interviewing the girls. The questionnaires were administered in vernacular and/or English depending on the level of education and understanding of the respondent. The background information on each girl was collected. Data were also collected on history and type of sexual abuse they have encountered. Data collected in this study was analyzed using simple percentage for the demographic data while Chi-square was used to process the hypotheses raised. Thus the data collected was analyzed using percentage and Chi- square statistical tool.



Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

<b>Age (Years)</b>	<b>Frequency %</b>
6 – 8	25 (8.9%)
9 – 11	172 (61.4%)
12 – 13	63 (22.5%)
14 – 15	40 (14.3%)
Total	280 (100)
<b>Religion</b>	
Christians	116 (41%)
Muslims	145 (52%)
Traditional worshippers	19 (7%)
<b>Educational Status</b>	
No formal education	36 (13%)
School going	155 (55.4%)
Out of school	89 (31.7%)
<b>Level of Termination of Education</b>	
• Primary	80 (90.2%)
• Junior secondary	7 (7.9%)
• Senior secondary	2 (2.2%)
Total	89 (100)

Table 1 show the demographic characteristics of the female children hawkers, out of the respondents those between ages of 9 to 11 years had the largest number of hawkers 172 (61.4%) while those aged 12 – 13 years constituted 63 (22.5%) followed by respondents age 14 to 15 years with 14.3% and those aged 6 to 8 years of the respondents were the least 25 (8.9%). More than half of the respondents were Muslims (145; 52%) while (116; 41%) were Christians, and 19 (7%) were traditional worshippers (neither Christians or Muslims), concerning educational status of the respondents above, half (155; 55.4%) were school going children, while the others either dropped out, or had no formal education. Almost all (80; 90.2%) terminated their education at primary school level, while others stopped at junior and senior secondary school. Thus, the socio-economic status of the parents did not significantly determine sexual abuse among the female children hawkers.

Table 2: Chi-square Frequency and Test Results on Socio-Economic Status of Parent and Sexual Abuse among Female Children Hawkers

Category	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Residual
Strongly Agree	71	70.77	-9.3
Agree	76	70.7	-6.3
Disagree	75	70.7	10.8
Strongly Disagree	58	70.7	5.8
Total	280		
DF = 3	$\chi^2$ calculated = 8.735	$\chi^2$ Tabulated = 7.63	

From the table 2, the calculated chi-square value is 8.735 while tabulated value is 7.63.

The chi-square calculated is greater than the chi-square tabulated. The indication of this is that the null hypothesis that socio-economic status of parents will not significantly be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers is rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis that socio-economic status of parents will significantly determine sexual abuse among female children hawkers is accepted. In essence, socio-economic status index such as housing environment, nature of job, social value, etc. affect sexual abuse of the female children hawkers either positively or negatively. Thus, parental educational background did not determine sexual abuse among female children hawkers.

Table 3: Chi-square Frequency and Test Results of Parental Educational Background and Sexual Abuse among Female children Hawkers

Category	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Residual
Strongly Agree	80	70.7	6.9
Agree	71	70.7	-6.3
Disagree	66	70.7	-16.3
Strongly Disagree	63	70.7	11.8
Total	280		
DF = 3	$\chi^2$ calculated = 14.109	$\chi^2$ Tabulated = 7.63	

Table 3 shows the calculated chi-square value to be 14.109 and the tabulated value is 7.63 (two tailed). Since the calculated value of chi-square is 14.109 is greater than the tabulated value, the alternative hypothesis is accepted that parental educational background will not significantly be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers. The acceptance of alternative hypothesis is significant at the probability of 0.05.

The implication of this is that the educational background of parents is a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers. It is expected that the higher the education, the less the exposure of female children to sexual abuse through hawking.

Table 4: Chi-Square Frequency and Test Results on Family Types and Sexual Abuse among Female Children Hawkers

Category	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Residual
Strongly Agree	90	70.7	-5.0
Agree	95	70.7	8.5
Disagree	25	70.7	18.7
Strongly Disagree	70	70.7	
Total	280		
DF = 3	$\chi^2$ calculated = 14.109	$\chi^2$ Tabulated = 7.63	

Calculated chi-square value is 14.109 and tabulated value is 7.63

The chi-square value calculated is greater than the tabulated value. It follows therefore that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis that family type (monogamous/polygamous) will not be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers was upheld. This means that most of the respondents believed that family type is a major determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers. Hence it is expected that children from polygamous family type will be more exposed to street hawking, and therefore be more subjected to sexual abuse.

## Discussion

The age distribution and the educational status of the respondents showed that mostly very young and out of school girls are involved in hawking with the age group 9 to 11 years being most prone (61.4%) or either had no formal education or had dropped out of school at primary and junior secondary school level. More than half of the respondents (67%) female street hawkers had had sexual intercourse, (53.4%) of them had experienced inappropriate touches of either the breast or the buttocks, (52.5%) had the experience of verbal abuses while (44%) had been kissed one time or the other.

The age range of the female hawkers that witnessed sexual intercourse was between 12 and 13 years (83%), and the location of the perpetrators was more prominent (38.3%). The majority of the perpetrators were customers of the female hawkers who themselves are older than them. Since majority of the perpetrators were adults who had been buying things from the female hawkers, they may have not necessarily induce the girls with gift like money, food or enticing them with other material items.

This finding is in agreement with the findings of Ajuwon, Akin, Olley and Akintola (2001) which found that since the majority of the girls hawked because of the high level of poverty in their families and after wandering in the street for a long period of time, became tired and hungry, and thus, they began to welcome and accept gifts.

Also, hawkers are exposed to many risks of which sexual abuse is a prominent part. The majority of the victims are either out of school or uneducated. Poverty and underdevelopment are great factors in street hawking and its consequence of sexual abuse. It follows therefore that the government should vigorously pursue poverty alleviation to improve the socio-economic status of the citizenry.

The result obtained from hypothesis one which states that socio-economic status of parents will not significantly be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers is rejected. The implication of this result is that socio-economic status index such as housing environment, nature of job; social value, etc. affect sexual abuse of the female children hawkers. This finding corroborates that of Onuzulike (2007) who found that other predisposing factors to child street hawking are: high cost of living, lack of sponsorship, poor school performance, poor parenthood, large family size, peer group pressure, poor home conditions, lack of parent care, poor scholastic achievement, etc. The indication of this finding is that female children from low socio-economic and foster homes are likely to be victims of sexual abuse by their customers, since they are most likely to engage in street hawking.

The findings from the second hypothesis which states that parental educational background will not determine sexual abuse of female children hawkers was not accepted. This finding implies that parent educational level may go a long way to determine female children partaking in street hawking and its resultant effect of sexual abuse. It follows therefore that children of highly educated parents are not likely to participate in street hawking which exposes a female child to all sorts of risks and danger associated with street hawking. The findings of Shailong, Onuk and Beshi (2011) is in agreement with this study which found that there are locations in the world where parents with high illiteracy level do not respect (formal) education because they lack the knowledge on how education can transform people to be better and thus, they prefer to send their children to the streets where they will make money for them. They further reaffirmed that illiteracy among the parents of the children will be transferred to the children because the children do not attend schools when their mates are learning various subjects (illiteracy in some African countries for instance has contributed to high level of street hawking by children in those locations). And furthermore, children street hawking is not only felt by the victims, but also by the society at large.

The third hypothesis that family type (monogamous/polygamous) will not be a determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers was upheld. This means that most of the respondents believed that family type is a major determinant of sexual abuse among female children hawkers. The findings of this hypothesis supported that of Abisoye (2013) that there are families that gave birth to too many children but all the children are being given to other persons, relations or neighbours who are well to do.

As a result of some families not adopting or practicing family planning, they give birth to more than the number of children they can care for. And it is not only the children that face hardship, but also the parents that gave birth to them, as they begin to think on how to get support to care for their children and this ends up with the act of sending the children to the streets to make money (hence, hawking of goods on streets to support their parents).

It follows therefore that larger size households are more likely to engage in economic activities such as using girls for hawking. Again, there is association between a large size household and girl street hawking with the possible explanation for this is that larger household size reduces the income available for each member of the household, thereby increasing the chances of a child participating in street hawking. Families, especially polygamous families who are not economically stable tend to send their girls outside the home to supplement the family's earning by hawking.

## **Implications for Emotional Distress**

The finding of this study has revealed the emotional distress of street hawking. First and foremost, the young girl is open to sexual abuse in form of rape, harassment and molestation and in the course; she most probably loses her dignity to shameless men who take advantage of her. As if that is not enough, such female children now becomes street wise and most often go after men with outrageous passion into commercial sex, thereby learning anti-social and criminal behaviour. The men of course compensates the young girl generously for such services and that way, hawking is only a front as the young girl hawker forfeits education, western or Islamic for hawking, and thus, she loses the opportunity to attend school and thereby lose all the benefits of education.

The female hawker learns many societal vices on the streets and is exposed to deviant behaviour while street hawking which turns her into a juvenile delinquent at a very early age. Street hawking also exposes the female child to dangers posed by fraudsters and ritual murderers because of her vulnerability and odd hawking hours (she falls easily into personal jeopardy, harsh and hazardous conditions such as becoming an easy target to occult predators/ritual killers. Because of the dangerous life street hawking poses to the female hawker, she is also susceptible to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases through coercive sex.

The findings of this study show that girl street hawker are adjudged to manifest inadequate moral development and are deficient in problem solving situations. Self-esteem is believed to be important in the ability of children to relate to their environment. And the abuse of children will always create problems for those children and the society at large which may cause the children to be depressed as they may lose their self-esteem, self-confidence and ego. Abuse may affect the academic performance of the children involved, and thus make them distrust others and cause sleeping disorder and self-destructive behaviours. And likewise, abuse may cause teenage pregnancy which has many consequences itself (premature birth, complications during birth, stigmatization and economic burden). The correlation which exists between child abuse and teenage pregnancy is a clear indication that if the problem of child abuse in all forms is proactively attended to in Nigerian society, it will reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy among female children in Nigeria.

## **Suggested Solutions to Female Children Street Hawking**

First and foremost, parents should be reoriented towards accepting their responsibilities in terms of taking care of their families. Children are great unquantifiable gifts. They should be adequately nurtured, love and care. Girls are most vulnerable, and so they should be treated as such. When parents accept their responsibilities of taking care of their children, there should be no need for girls to hawk.

Secondly, there should be a planned literacy/vocational programme for the girl-child that would afford her the opportunity to attain some literacy level and at the same time acquire some vocational skills. A deliberate policy that would focus on female literacy and skills acquisition would go a long way in compensating the family of the girl hawker. This would have to be done through intensive sensitization and mobilization of the public towards active participation, by the use of communication networks, traditional rulers and women organisations. Some states have been able to do this with the help of some non-governmental organisations, and it has proved very successful.

There should be a participatory programme that will use the theatre as an avenue to generate new paths for street children to develop critical awareness about problems in their daily lives as well as possible solutions to their problems. The shade tree programme should be able to help the children identify their problems, analyze their causes and consequences, and explore and rehearse solutions and avenues to evaluate change. Another very important and feasible way to help the young girl is to train her in some basic trades. Vocational education and training are aimed at earning a living and empowerment for self-reliance. This is a good substitute for hawking. This form of non-formal education is particularly favoured as an income-generating programme. And it comes in form of small-scale projects aimed at training the girl-child to be self-employed which will blend very well with her eventual life.

This paper further recommends that parents should provide for their adolescent girls basic needs, which includes food, shelter, clothing and such things that will help them grow into a physically and emotionally healthy adult. The positive fulfilment of basic needs is a basis for pro-social behaviour and growth of cohesive families and communities. A number of ideas have to be accessed, examined, cultivated and practiced to stop the challenge of street hawking by children on the streets. It is believed that these points/ideas will solve this challenge that all countries in the world have been facing. The government and non-governmental organizations that work to ensure that children are not treated in an inhuman manner have some roles to perform here.

They should send their officials to the streets of cities and fetch the wandering children and see how to punish the law offenders that send the children to the streets. When the offenders of the law protecting child's right are properly treated in accordance to the offence they commit, they will stop sending children to the streets for hawking.

The government and UNICEF should work hand in hand to ensure that the law protecting the girl-child and boys are properly implemented and enforced. There should be government officials at different states of the world should be checkmating on children that hawk in the streets and highways and provide solutions for the children either by sponsoring them academically or providing their parents with the necessary skills to increase their earnings. And the building of orphanages is another welcomed idea that can reduce the level of child hawking in the world. Those who fall victims of street hawking as a result of wars should be taken good care of through the help from individuals and government efforts. Doing this will reduce the number of street children, and help them overcome the health challenges they face while hawking on the streets.

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